

BASIC APPROACHES TO MENTAL HEALTH:

. . . *happy children of children we fathered and cherished*

Shall see noble vistas of freedom before them

On the roads we built well for the love that we bore them . . .

THE "Forest Hill Village Project" which began in 1948, whatever its defects, did not suffer the disadvantages—or advantages—of simplicity. Nothing more unlike the "laboratory situation" could have been found or contrived, and its ambitions, which appeared grand against the scale of what is needed, may be also regarded as grandiose against the scale of what could be done. It is partly for this reason that much that was learned and that was important when learned was—despite a not inconsiderable literature¹ about the project or growing out of it—not fully or even adequately reported.²

Any attempt adequately to state its "objectives"—even the objectives consciously in the minds of the participants and explicitly stated beforehand—threatens to run into a small dissertation and thus to occupy the space intended for the reporting of what actually occurred. Yet, without such a statement, the program needlessly appears as an *ad hoc* piece of social carpentry, and its evaluation, pro or con, becomes impossible or arbitrary. We must resign our-

¹ A *partial* list appears in [3].

² Indeed, ironically, the now-scattered participants sit atop a gold-mine of data which only time and money in fairly large chunks would permit them to mine—or, perhaps more accurately, since it is "mined" to "deliver to the mill" of public and scholarly consumption.

selves, here, then, to brevity, and accept such inadequacy as it imposes.

In barest outline, then, the Project, taken as a whole, aimed to:

1. Perform an operation with, in, and upon a community, more particularly its children.

2. Train a first cadre of educators drawn from all over Canada, and thereby both to reform education to some degree from within and to develop a differentiated, and thus to some degree new, profession.

3. Extract, both from the experience itself and by means of the opportunities to which it gave rise, a body of "scientific" information that would have utility for behavior theory and relatively immediate practical implications.

Even so baldly stated, the Project may be seen as unduly complex; and, expanding the statement only a little, we may see how really complex that complexity was.

The "Operation in the Community"

The operation in the community was itself very like a massive military assault with all weapons, in the hope that a breakthrough anywhere could be advantageously exploited. It might indeed be best represented as the deployment of a series of task forces, each with a special mission, but each with a responsibility to coordinate its activities with others, so as to evoke the image at least of a battle rather than a series of sorties. It was our operational intent, then:

1. To bring to the community a more or less traditional "child guidance clinic" and to use it in several ways, *e.g.*,

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- a. In its traditional role, to "treat" the most disturbed of the disturbed school-children.
- b. To experiment with the possibilities of "bringing it closer to the school," not only geographically but morally, so that by an appropriate re-making of school or clinic or both, identity of aim and complementarity of action on behalf of the disturbed child might be achieved rather than piously subscribed to.
- c. To make the "treatment" a pervasive influence in the further education, individually and collectively, of the community's already excellent educators.
- d. To use the clinic as an observation and practice facility for the other educators brought from across Canada.
- e. To make the clinical operation a research instrument in so far as it studied itself and also in so far as it provided one probe into the life of part, at least, of the community.
2. To help the school deal "better" with its moderately disturbed children on its own—first by exploring methods of so doing, second by demonstrating them, and third by doing both in such a way that the school's capacity subsequently to deal with its own infra-clinical problems would be increased.
3. To make a moderately massive venture into what has been called by some "preventive psychiatry," by others "promotion of positive mental health," and by us "the improvement of human relatedness."
4. To do such things as might be necessary to promote or protect or increase the impact of the Project as a whole. This ap-

pendical item turned out, itself, to generate a whole series of enterprises, welcome in a human sense while incredibly burdensome in further overstraining stretched resources. For example, we were driven (or willingly seduced) thereby into:

- a. Participation in school policy formation;
- b. Consulting on community public affairs;
- c. Virtually operating a referral service for disturbed adults;
- d. Participating in the normal activities of the outstanding Home and School Association (very like the U. S. P.T.A.);
- e. Providing formal in-service training for school staff;
- f. Engaging in a serious, long, adult education venture for parents at almost the same level of intensity and profundity as we had proposed for the "undisturbed" children themselves.

The "Training" of Special Educators

Intimately connected with all other aspects of the program, we "trained" or "exposed to a special experience" annually about a dozen select teachers drawn from just about every section of the country. We had in mind for them a special role in the school systems to which they would be returning, and the "training" or "learning experience" was geared to this end. We looked for a body of people eventually in the schools who were:

1. Competent and respectable teachers to begin with, oriented toward the task of teaching (rather than, say, psychotherapy) and fully cognizant of its possibilities and difficulties.

2. So thoroughly exposed to clinical practice at every level of difficulty from mental hospital, through juvenile court to our own child guidance clinic that they would be

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emotionally as well as intellectually convinced that specialist tasks had best be left to specialists—and at the same time capable of and desirous of intelligent, imaginative cooperation with clinical personnel. (It was for this reason, among others, that they came to be called “liaison officers,” hopefully interpreting mental health experts and personnel and educational experts and personnel to one another.)

3. Intellectually prepared by a year’s academic work, by practice and discussion, to appreciate, at least in its main bold outlines, what the behavioral sciences have to say about human life and how this differs (and why, and with what implications for action) from the folklore about human nature, collective and individual, on which they had grown up and founded their professional and personal way of life.

4. Able seriously to engage in or supervise the program of adult education and community organization which seems, by default of other institutions and the school’s own necessities, to have fallen into the rapidly growing list of “roles the school must perform.”

5. Themselves practised in and able to communicate to others the attitudes and techniques of what we called earlier in this paper the “venture into promotion of positive mental health.”

6. Able to do at least small-scale and modest research, and to appreciate the relevant research reports of others, discriminating, hopefully, the few kernels of warranted assertion from the voluminous chaff of ill-founded opinion.

To this modest list of initial aims we found ourselves forced to add another—as we should have foreseen, but did not. We had to offer extended opportunity to “work through emotionally” the experience presented, since we found we were not so much “teaching” these people as making them over at pretty profound levels. The opportunities we had to provide ranged from frank psychotherapy in a few cases to extended sessions of emotion-laden discussion for both individuals and groups. In effect, then, we found that instead of providing a training course (in the every-

day meaning of that term) we had to provide in and with that experience the counterpart of what we had in the community: facilities for working through disturbance in the very disturbed, the moderately disturbed, and the “normally disturbed.”

Research

Like the other two “program elements,” the research enterprise had numerous aims:

1. We wanted to carry out research upon and note and report adequately what we ourselves were doing and its impact and consequences.

2. We wanted to produce—and did—an “ethnological” or “sociographic” report upon the whole community, making use therefor of the flood, not to say deluge, of material that poured in upon us from all these enterprises.

3. We wanted, most particularly, to make of our “venture into positive mental health promotion” a rather exact scientific test and to report upon it adequately. The first we did, and the second—except in so far as it is sketched here and embodied in a Ph.D. thesis elsewhere [2]—remains to be done.

4. We wanted to explore—and we did—personality differences in the children of the community’s two predominant religio-ethnic groups,³ and its various social and economic strata. (The analysis led in one sense nowhere. Using the crude everyday tests of statistical significance we found a considerable number of fascinating “differences,” which subsequent more sophisticated analysis fully explained away—all very sad for interesting publication.)

I do not know as I look back, at this remove in time, on this already condensed and truncated statement of our purposes then, whether to say that the whole project was conceived in lunacy or in inspiration, or with a more than moderate touch of both. I suppose the last. But there must have been enough realism in it all to make possible the achievement of many of the aims

³ Dichotomized for (not by) us on arrival as “Jews and Gentiles.”

in full, some in part, and only a very few not at all.⁴

The rest of this paper must restrict itself to the "Human Relations Classes," but what is said must be viewed in the context of the foregoing. They had not only to be a "service" and to permit research upon themselves. They were at the same time not only training ground for our trainees, a "demonstration"—not to say an "eye-opener"—for local school personnel and innumerable visiting firemen, but they were also a most important source of "data" for our ethnological volume. We shall treat of them here only in their "service" aspect.

The Human Relations Classes

Perhaps the most orderly mode of presentation in giving an account of these classes is to make moderately clear the underlying "philosophy" or rationale, to describe briefly the procedure, to give some clue of what they looked and "felt" like as a human experience, and then to resume the scientific strait-jacket and describe them as the scientific experiment they represented and report the results.

Underlying Philosophy

The stated aim of the enterprise was to afford "normal" children in everyday classrooms a regular exposure to a rather special experience. The experience—nothing more (nor less!) than "free" discussion, as will appear in the sequel—was intended to aid the child to understand himself, his peers,

and the rest of the world in which he lived, at least in its most immediate bearing on his self-definition and his most general and profound feelings. The understanding, it was hoped, would be emotional as well as intellectual—an act of integration into the whole self rather than mere capture by the intellect, an everyday analogue, if we may be so bold, of the "gain in insight" found for many on the psychoanalytic couch and, for others, elsewhere. Perhaps the word *analogue* needs double stress: we were not bringing the couch to the classroom, nor indeed conducting therapy.

But the analogy has to extend further than merely to the hoped-for outcome in "insight," or even the kind of insight, and reorientation of thought, feeling, belief, and behavior. It must extend at least also to a communality in faith and method. The communality in faith lay in the belief that people (in this case, children) really free (externally) to talk about anything will finally talk about everything, but also, in the curious circling way such communication has, will concentrate on those matters that have for them vital psychodynamic import. The communality in method lay in the provision and encouragement of just such stated, orderly, time-and-place structured but other-restraints-removed freedom, and in the atmosphere of interested, warm, uncriticizing, respectful support engendered—as between child and child and as between children and (special) "teacher." To the points of similarity or identity we must also add a point of difference: we trusted that what would come out in the classroom would, in general, not be so "bizarre," idiosyncratic, or shocking to the speaker or his auditors as to call for deep transference⁵ or other special provision to contain and protect against its repercussions.⁶ Our trust

⁴ If I may speak *ex cathedra*, leaving proof for another time and place, I would say that the services were pretty well provided as planned, the training pretty well carried out as intended, and the major research carried out moderately well but not yet properly published. Not that we thus achieved all our major intentions. We have more serious questions about what services "should be" provided for such a community and how and by whom than we had to begin with, so that we would not regard our service program as a "demonstration." Our training program was probably "successful," but most of our trainees finally came to fill important roles in their school systems and elsewhere quite different from those we had foreseen. And our research, while it answered some questions, raised more questions for us than we had ever dreamed of—including questions about the ethics of research and its tolerable or optimal place in human life.

⁵ That transference in any intelligible meaning of that term occurred we shall not deny—nor, for those who wish to retain a professional monopoly on it, shall we insist that it did.

⁶ It must, however, be remembered that we had designedly provided access to a psychiatric clinic in case repercussions occurred that could not otherwise be dealt with, as they did in a couple of cases. We would be most uneasy about the use of the method without access to prompt, adequate, personal psychotherapy at need.

in this respect was fully borne out. For a last point of identity, we foresaw that much that would come out would be primarily “symbolic” rather than immediately “representative,” that the importance of what was going on could be understood only in such terms—so that the connection even among topics would be otherwise unintelligible—and that the children themselves would realize the symbolic connections.

Out of such a procedure, we believed as persons and “hypothesized” as scientists, would come a number of connected things: a greater appreciation of “democracy” in one vocabulary, an improvement in “character” in another universe of discourse, a “gain in mental health” in a third.

Procedure

The actual procedure was simplicity itself, though, like all simplicities, it involved a complex and difficult discipline in the achievement.

Into each of several classrooms, from Grade 4 to Grade 12 in Forest Hill Village, and down to Grade 1 elsewhere, went a staff member of the Project or a specially trained teacher with the following message:

We talk about many things in school, and I'm sure some of them interest you a lot and some don't. We thought it would be a wonderful idea if you kids had one hour every week in which you could talk about anything you felt like, and Mr. and Miss ——— [their Principal and teacher] say we could have this hour every week to do so. Would you like that or . . .

The exact wording of course would vary appropriately to age, but the content of the message was the same. It would hardly be completed before the questions arose: “*Anything* we want?” “For the whole school year?” “Could we talk about . . .?” and so on. Actually, in effect, the first discussion was already launched, although in form this was a preliminary: did they or didn't they want such an hour? With the sole exception of one class,⁷ all classes that had an opportunity eagerly embraced the offer.

⁷ An interesting special story for some day.

The following week, the same teacher would appear with a gentle reminder: “Well, this is our hour to talk about anything we like. What shall we talk about?” The kids took it from there. In subsequent weeks, the mere appearance of the teacher was usually enough to set things going, although some teachers preferred something like, “Where were we when we stopped last week?”, or, less implicative of any expectation of continuity, “Well, where shall we begin . . .?”

After that, the role of the teacher or staff member lay largely in listening, no matter whether the remark was ostensibly addressed from child to teacher or from child to child. Rare interventions would occur if one child's statement needed clarifying for another or if a summary of what had been said seemed to be necessary to dispel confusion. Sometimes, acting upon the expressed or inferred desire of the children, the teacher would note on the blackboard points that had been made. Otherwise, the teacher was to be as much as possible a warm and living presence, but interested only in watching a good game—a “good game” being one in which everybody got a chance to say whatever he wanted. One teacher, with an incredible facial vocabulary, opened and closed sessions and kept the verbal traffic from snarling with nothing but a smile that moved like a warm beam from one child to another. Occasionally she said “Billy?” as a child moved to speak, or, very gently, “Jane?” as another seemed to want to, but needed “permission” to begin. In three months she said little more in a class of energy-bursting grade fivers. Under no circumstances was approval or disapproval of an act reported or a statement made to be shown.⁸ The children's judgments on one another—part of the material—*per contra*,

⁸ One leader (not a trainee) who had accepted the idea intellectually but was unable to cope with it emotionally received the children's statements with blandness or differential frowns. He could not keep his preaching out of his face. The result was what might have been expected: children pussyfooting around a temporarily naughty—hence also puzzling and frightening—Sunday school teacher.

had to be accepted with warmth and interest on a level with everything else.⁹

Apt words to characterize such a procedure are hard to find: perhaps the GAP report [1] puts it well in calling the classes "non-directive, unstructured and group-determined."

Human Experience

What might have most struck a reasonably well-oriented observer, present at a sufficient number¹⁰ of such class-sessions? Or, since all kinds of observers did come at various times, what did appear to some or all?

An observation, striking for some, was that "the problem of classroom control" or "discipline" disappeared. This is not quite accurate but, apart from occasional difficulty in stopping the kids for dismissal at the end of the hour or for the next class, virtually no representation of adult rules or authority was required.

An observation, striking for nearly all onlookers, was the degree of emotional engagement of the children. Expressed at every level—sometimes flushed faces and altered breathing, the "ring" of voice, the body squirming in discomfort or wriggling with the pleasure of discovery or rigid or tense with struggle, at other times expressed as well or instead by the language in which communication was garbed, sometimes represented only by the unusual content of a statement or story—however expressed, it was difficult not to recognize very serious emotional engagement (for most children) in a very serious enterprise.¹¹ Such infer-

ences were strengthened by the rather-difficult-to-deal-with requests to extend the length of the periods¹² or increase their frequency or (essentially both) to supplement them with further periods in the evening at the children's homes.

For many other observers the most striking effect was caught in the statement "I didn't know kids *could* talk like that" or "I wouldn't have thought kids *their age* thought about those things." In some cases, the speaker referred to the emotional depth and range or quality commented upon in the preceding paragraph. In other cases, what seemed to be a "revelation" was the intellectual grasp of the children, the surprising amount of direct or indirect knowledge they could bring relevantly to bear or the analytic facility they showed in ordering it. In still other cases, what astounded the observer was the dominant "ethical preoccupation," the sometimes manifest but otherwise clearly latent, homing upon good or bad, better or worse, right or wrong, wise or unwise. Even their own shared behavior in the discussion itself came in for critical review. In one Grade 12 class, first one student noted and then many commented upon—not so much harshly as in sad wonder—their tendency to "evasion" as he called it—evasion of an issue by looking elsewhere, or, once present, evasion of a stand upon it as against "talking about it." "Every time we really get close to something," he said, "we quick shift to something else." The animus of the discussion that followed showed both a desire to "understand" their own evasiveness—a psychological enterprise in both meanings of that term—and to avoid or reduce it—a practical and ethical pursuit.

For still others, negative impressions predominated. Evident was the enormous waste of time¹³ in coming to a point; a conclusion that a good teacher could have quietly "demonstrated" in 10 minutes might take hours and the outpouring of considerable passion to reach. Uncomfort-

⁹ Any psychoanalyst who has tried his procedure away from the safety-point at the head of the couch will readily realize the difficulty involved, the tendency for performance to fail of perfection, and the uselessness of a poker-face mask attempting to hide approbative or disapprobative thoughts and feelings. The test searched souls—especially given the fact that our trainees were "educationally" (*i.e.*, preaching and teaching) oriented, rather than medically or scientifically disposed.

¹⁰ "A sufficient number" because an isolated session might appear incomprehensible, like three words torn from a message the remainder of which had been lost.

¹¹ Serious enough, at least, to rank in terms of involvement with, instead of well below, play at one age, athletics at another, rating-and-dating enterprises at a third.

¹² An hour in the higher grades, a half-hour in the lower.

¹³ Productive waste, as we saw it, and probably indispensable *i.e.*, waste only in a mistaken or irrelevant frame of reference.

able also for many watchers was the amount of "unfinished business," from a pedagogical viewpoint, in the air at any one time: unfinished sentences, topics touched upon and abandoned, matters brought up but not "disposed of"—the near-opposite of a neat, well-rounded lesson. For still others, most difficult to view with equanimity or sympathy was the emotive expression itself, more particularly the exposure in word, tone, or manner of hostility or aggression, most particularly in the form of sudden breakthrough in normally unusually mild and pleasant children.¹⁴ Others again were more impressed by the opposite of "ethical preoccupation" (as they saw it): the matter-of-factness, especially among children in the lower grades, with which they spoke of events in which adults would have expected them to have strong investments of guilt, shame, or disapproval.¹⁵ Lastly, some could only register a deep unease, as the children's discussion stirred in them that of which, for various reasons, they could not be aware. But, positive or negative, few observers failed to be profoundly stirred, one or two bewildered,¹⁶ one or two angry,¹⁷ a few dazed, some enthusiastic.¹⁸

So much for form, but what of content? What did the children talk about?

A full account of what any one classroom

talked about would fill a small book. The most that can be done here is to indicate by a couple of summary "case histories" something of level and general direction.

Two Case Histories

A Grade 6 classroom, for instance, said at the beginning that they wanted "to talk about the atom bomb." The initial discussion was rather technical, rather well-informed, but with some science-fiction rather than factual overtones. The discussion passed from "the weapon" in its technical complexity and awesome magic to its destructive potential, its annihilating possibilities even if it "fell downtown," *i.e.*, home and community could no longer provide protection against what might be about to happen in the big, public world outside. From this—and we must remember that these are weeks, not minutes, that separate stages in the discussion—the possibilities, or rather the impossibilities, of defense were canvassed, the feelings of and about "defenselessness" ever more plainly exposed. There was a relatively short excursion to talk about "the Russians"—the "enemy," the other, the alien, the dangerous non-ego. From here, the talk turned insensibly to other "disasters," actual or potential—first cosmic, then closer to home. At some early stage in this, someone suggested that they do what they had been doing anyway: "Let's talk about things we fear." Without formal motion or approval, that's what "we" did—now looking through the other end of the telescope, nearest and most intimate things first. "Falling," "failing," "my Dad's belt," adult criticism, explosions, "fights" (verbal and at home), "my older brother—boy, what he can do to you . . . [trailing off] . . .," "my kid sister . . . when I think of what I'd like to do to her. She . . .," own emotions ". . . sometimes, my own temper!" and so on. Finally, one child adds what one might think an odd and specific instance: "Being on a stage. You have that funny feeling. Everybody [grown-up] is talking, and you know they're talking about you. You don't think you can do it." Others, first, add detail to these

¹⁴ Not that anyone observed what could be seen almost any day in any therapist's consulting room, but something between that and the stereotyped behavior, "polite" or "impolite," which marks the range of everyday academic life.

¹⁵ *E.g.*, cheating in examinations or everyday classroom routines.

¹⁶ One eminent cleric said he would rather not discuss the (children's) discussion "right now"; he wanted to "rethink his whole position" on educating children. One highly-placed educational administrator, wiping sweat from his forehead on a cool day, used almost identical words.

¹⁷ One enormously competent, normally very smooth, rather authoritarian school administrator was angered to the point of near incoherence, and, where coherent, patent self-contradiction—very much "out of character."

¹⁸ Perhaps the most eloquent testimony to impact lies not in words but behavior. Those adults and students who adopted or adapted what they saw (or thought they saw) to home, to religious school, to academic staff meeting, to adult education ventures, to their own student-fraternity or other enterprises, were surely "saying" something thereby, even if they had said nothing else.

actual and concrete experiences.¹⁹ The whispered conversation in the audience—what *must be* said when you cannot hear—various other aspects of the staged performance, the being under scrutiny, the mixed feelings in being the focus of mass attention. Elaboration goes on till the “on the stage” topic is nearly flogged to death, but still they hang on to it. Suddenly, another child creates another shift to another level of abstraction. “Isn’t it *always* like that?” she asks, meaning life-for-the-child-in-the-presence-of-adults generally. Quickly (and with a seeming mixture of anxiety and relief) the correspondences between the specific and general situation are filled in. “They’re *always* looking at you,” “You know they talk about you when you’re not there,” their talk is invariably or mostly critical, “You don’t know what they expect . . .,” “They expect too much . . .,” “Kids can’t do [or be] the way they want . . .,” “You can’t tell them what it feels like . . .,” and so on. Again elaboration—indeed overdrawing—to the point of exhaustion. Then another shift, occasioned by the remark of a child for a long time silent: “How do you know what they talk about when you’re not there?” There follows a long review—first strongly defensive, then worriedly curious—of what they have just constructed as an account of “what life is really like.” Points are tested for credibility. “Why do we think they’re always criticizing?” “Well, when they whisper . . .,” “They *must* be . . .” “Couldn’t they be saying . . .” [Flatly:] “No.” Assertion and counter-assertion. Increasing doubt. A sudden turning of attention from their several homes and the vague communal adult “they” to their common teacher. “She expects . . .,” “She thinks . . .,” “She tells you . . .”—no one emotion in evidence, but a great deal of the mixture there is. Again, piling up of detail; again, the return of doubt: “Does she really . . .?” “How do you know?” “Did she ever say?” Finally, a bold spirit: “Couldn’t

we *ask* her [what she expects]?” Some enthusiastic, some skeptical, some sure such matters can’t be discussed between child and adult. Finally, a decision to ask *her* (instead of the special teacher) to have a session like this with them . . . tell her what they feel . . . what kids their age can and can’t do . . . see what she really does expect.²⁰ Huge relief all round; wonder at how like and how different they all are; a set toward reality-testing and action as against “worrying” and “adjusting”; perhaps other consequences, good or bad, which observation failed to catch.

One Grade 6 Human Relations Class has come to the end of the year.

Grade 10? Very much different, very much the same. Different in mode of expression, level of abstraction, amount of private material wittingly introduced or revealed, frequency of passionate outburst, elaboration of “defenses.” Very much the same in the duality between the ostensible and the “real” (or, certainly, significant) matter of communication, the “circling” about difficult points, the sudden shifts in topic as the real meaning of what has been said becomes clear, if not explicit.

They begin by wanting “to talk about corporal punishment.”²¹ The subject is almost immediately limited to “corporal punishment for teenagers” (useless and bad) as against the same thing for children the age of their kid brothers and sisters (probably necessary and, likely, effective, though not for *them* at that age, either). The discussion again generalizes—from home, to school, to society generally; from corporal punishment to capital punishment to punishment in general. For three weeks there is nothing resembling orderly discussion, merely heated opinion with one dogmatic statement counterposed to another. Interpersonal anger and generalized irritation with the process mount. Someone

²⁰ Some such session with “her” was finally had.

²¹ Supposedly an “accident,” since they have just been reading David Copperfield and have shown disturbance at the scene in which Mr. Murdstone beats David, and also at Mr. Creakle’s free use of pedagogical prerogative in this direction at Falem House.

¹⁹ Frequent in a community where children are much encouraged first to acquire skills and then to exhibit them in formal performance.

finally draws attention to what is happening, suggests they look at evidence already in their possession. They look at what they know of English history (which they are currently studying) and other anthropological bits they have. At least doubt succeeds dogmatism. They ask themselves who "believes in it" and why, who doesn't and why. They conclude they don't know but could find out. They decide to "interview" some parents, some kids in other classes, a scattering of teachers, the principals of their own school system, and then, in a burst of insight, some of the private-school principals "who believe in it so much" and some principals of schools in poor districts. Reports of and discussion upon these interviews consume several weeks. Insensibly the discussion is shifting from corporal punishment to the whole problem of control and authority, more particularly the relation of the adolescent to the adults and their institutions. There is a beginning tendency to empathize, to review with sympathetic imagination the problems of and possibilities in the role of "the other," the grownup, the accredited representative of society.

In one of the last interviews to be reported a boy begins, "I went to see Mr. . . . [a key teacher] and first he asked if he would be quoted . . ." He reports some thin material. Silence.

Noting his postural and tonal expression of weariness and discouragement, the "special teacher"²² makes a rare—and clumsy—direct intervention: "His asking whether he'd be quoted bothered you?" Emphatically: "No." "What did it mean?" "Why, that if he wouldn't be quoted maybe he'd say what he really thought, and otherwise what he thought the school-board wanted him to say . . ." "And that didn't bother you?" "No." General excitement: many talking at once, many more wanting to.

The class was off on a "wholly new" track—"telling the truth." Emphatic, predominant, and well-defended was the view that "you tell people what they want to hear."

Personal anecdotes go on for weeks: "When my mother asks me what I think . . .," "When people ask for your opinion . . ."—all voices in the same direction: the dominant consideration in communication is not truth-value but effect. Some put the case in terms of achieving their ends (impossible by other methods), some in terms of "kindness" (the questioner only wants to be reassured and confirmed anyway; it would only be "cruel" to say what you really think). With the odd exception, there is near-unanimity: Dale Carnegie is justified of all his children. Suddenly one of the loudest protagonists of this viewpoint sees a new bearing and, without withdrawing anything he said, makes an impassioned statement that if they (his classmates) are all behaving this way, it's useless to talk to them. *He* wants independent views, not mere confirmation of his own. He picks up things only just said in the locker-room: "Did you really mean . . .?" The class is momentarily stunned. They begin to make concrete exceptions to their "general rule." They extend these. Finally they seem to be saying that truth is relational, something you owe your friends but nobody else (least of all, adults), certainly not your "enemies." The counter-implication dawns on them: if we're saying you can and should treat friends thus but enemies so, we must feel most people, including "well-loved" parents and teachers, are enemies. But students are already bringing in new evidence. They have tried being direct and honest, here with a parent, there with a peer; and the results, far from being catastrophic, were heart-warming or exciting or "just the opposite of what you'd expect" (*i.e.*, friendship-increasing rather than threatening). No abstract resolution upon the dilemma is reached, but an air of reconsideration and trying out behavior founded on other principles is obtained. By now they tire of the subject: "We can't settle it here, right now."

What do they want to talk of next? A large list of topics is compiled and put on the board. At its first mention, one topic dominates all others (Jewish-Gentile dating) and a forest of hands and chorus of voices make clear that this is "it." The discussion,

²² In this case, the writer.

much too long to report here, continued with unabated interest for the rest of the school year. Again, in the beginning: simplicities, dogmatic statements of opinion, charges of hypocrisy leveled against adults who seemingly preach integration on the basis of personality-value while practising and ensuring segregation on the basis of different considerations. Then attention to the complexities involved—for society generally, for these living, concrete adults, for themselves, the “new generation.” Finally, in the last two sessions of the year, they leave themselves with two troublesome questions for reflection. What kind of person would you have to be to change all this (the irrationalities and counter-rationalities of the social order?) And, as revealed in this whole year’s discussion, what kind of people are *we* (in relation to the previous question)?

A disordered year’s discussion? Only superficially. More profoundly, who could have devised a better (more logical or psychological) order:

Punishment, as a lead-in to

The Adolescent in Relation to Authority, as preparation for

To Whom Can You Tell What Truths?, before discussing the most-vexed and double-talk laden community problem:

Jewish-Gentile Relations, to a realistic finale *What Do You Have to Be If You Want to Reform the World*—or even your corner of it?

Results

The results of the experience upon the children could be evaluated “by naked eye,” but then we should be relying on an unknown observer’s reliability and credibility. There was a wealth of evidence on this point, some of it more convincing to me than the scientifically measured results—evidence from children’s reports on their own feelings or altered behavior, reports from parents and teachers and the Director of Education. But, passing up the vividness of immediate perception for the safety of scientific procedure, what do we get?

In order to answer that question, the control aspect of the experiment must be briefly

described. Before we did anything else in the Village, we subjected all the children to a battery of “measures”: a personality test, a “health inventory,” a “sociometric” test, and a teacher’s rating-scale (in reference to the child’s “mental health”). We then selected at several grade levels one classroom for the “human relations classes.” From the remaining pool of children at that grade level we selected as a “control” one child who was matched with each of the experimental children simultaneously for sex, ethnicity, IQ, etc. While these “control” children remained in their classes and were exposed to the regular routines of home and school, the “experimentals” had six to nine months of “Human Relations Classes.” About a year-and-a-half later, all children were retested on the identical tests they had originally undergone. Using careful statistical methods²³ we were able to estimate the net result of the experience (on the average) on the children who had undergone it [2].²⁴ We had started with 13 connected hypotheses as to what the results would be. The chief of these, of course, was to the effect that the experimental groups would show differential gains when compared with the controls in the three kinds of tests employed. If these are probes into mental health, then this is equivalent to saying we believed the experimental children would show differential mental health gains.

The analysis was actually confined to two grade-levels: Grade 6 and Grade 10. For these two grades, the hypotheses were all or mostly all borne out, with varying degrees of statistical reliability. One hypothesis—that younger children would, because of greater flexibility, “profit” more than older ones—was contradicted by the evidence. They were much more “variable,” but it was impossible to say reliably that they profited more. Another hypothesis was added later and tested only for Grade 10 children: that experimental children, despite substantial loss of time for human

²³ Principally, an “analysis of variance and covariance.”

²⁴ Detailed results are reported elsewhere [2].

relations classes, would show differential gain over the control children in their school subject marks! This hypothesis—an unlooked-for by-product benefit—was dramatically confirmed for marks-in-all-subjects-taken-together, for—curiously—history, and—incredibly—for English, the subject in which the experimentals had had to sacrifice half their time to make room for the Human Relations Classes at all.

The weight of the evidence, qualitative and quantitative, makes it difficult to doubt that something of consequence, and something desirable, occurred. History itself added a footnote. In the graduating year of the Grade 10 group (*i.e.*, three years later) five students were awarded major scholarships on the basis of competitive examinations by the University of Toronto. Four of these came from the experimental group,

one was a new arrival from outside the school system, none was a member of the four-times-as-numerous non-experimental group. Perhaps, the long arm of coincidence . . . but enough to give one pause, I should think, for reflection.

We would like to see the experiment first reported and then repeated. Until then, we are left with a very strong feeling of promising possibilities and warranted hope.

References

1. Committee on Preventive Psychiatry of the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry. Report No. 18. Topeka, Kansas: 1951.
2. Mallinson, T. An experimental investigation of group-directed discussion in the classroom. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 1954.
3. Seeley, J. R., Sim, A., & Loosley, E. W. *Crestwood Heights*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956.

REHABILITATION COUNSELOR STUDY TO BE PUBLISHED

The U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare has authorized publication of the first four reports of a rehabilitation counselor education study directed by Dr. James Herrick Hall, Associate Professor of Education at Southern Illinois University.

Representing three years of research, the reports identify and analyze studies related to rehabilitation and include more than 1,000 theses and dissertations and 1,600 non-degree studies from 129 universities. The study was sponsored by the National Rehabilitation Association, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, and Southern Illinois University.